

SIVA AND DEMONS

Siva is regarded as one part of the Great Hindu Trinity, alongside Brahma and Visnu. Brahma is the creator, Visnu the preserver and Siva the destroyer of the universe (Ghosh 13). Siva resides on Mount Kailasa along with his wife, Parvati. While he is known as the destroyer of the universe, Siva possesses a myriad of contradicting qualities. He is both terrible and benign; the supreme ascetic, yet a symbol of sensuality; granter of boons to those who are most devoted to him, and destroyer of those who displease him. It is these qualities which result in some interesting encounters with various demons.

While we can call some of the beings that Siva encounters and battles with “demons” in English, there is not always a clear-cut line between good and evil in Hinduism. Although gods are supposed to be different from demons, there is not always a clear cut distinction between the good characteristics of one and the evil characteristics of the other. While most Hindu demons behave in the way that is expected of them in the West – stealing, killing, raping, generally being evil – there are some demons in Hindu mythology that are righteous and practice asceticism. It is through this asceticism that the gods grant boons to these “good” demons, and it is through the abuse of these boons that they become evil. Siva’s mythology tells of encounters of both “evil” demons and “good” demons, and has even granted boons to some “good” demons, only to have them turn around and use their boons against him.

It is possible for demons to be born from gods, and for gods to cleanse demons of their “demon-ness”. The story of Andhaka illustrates both concepts. Once, Parvati covered Siva’s two eyes, and a drop of sweat fell into his third eye. From this, the demon Andhaka was born, with Parvati as his mother and Siva as his father. Siva saw the evil that Andhaka was capable of and

gave him away to the demon king Hiranyaksa to raise. When Andhaka was older, he inherited Hiranyaksa's kingdom. After meditating and sacrificing pieces of his own flesh, Andhaka was able to request a boon from Brahma. Andhaka wanted to live forever, but as all things must eventually die, Brahma could only grant him near immortality; Andhaka had to declare the conditions for his death. Wanting to make the conditions near impossible, Andhaka wished that his death would only come when he developed feelings for his own mother and that even if he desired his own mother, only Siva could kill him. One day, while in the forest, Andhaka encountered an ascetic and his beautiful wife. Andhaka tried to seduce the woman and demanded that the ascetic surrender his wife, as a man who had renounced his worldly ways would have no need for a beautiful woman. The ascetic refused, to which Andhaka sought to do battle with him, not knowing that the beautiful woman he lusted after was Parvati, his mother. This meant that the ascetic with whom he challenged to battle was Siva. Siva impaled Andhaka with his trident and burned him with his third eye. Siva's third eye was so powerful, he not only burned away Andhaka's body, but also his sins and demonic ways. Then Siva gave Andhaka a form with three eyes, a blue neck, and matted hair, and Parvati adopted him as her son (O'Flaherty 1973:191).

When seduction is used by both Siva and his enemy, Siva emerges supreme by virtue of his sexual powers (O'Flaherty 1973:184). Siva once commented on Parvati's dark complexion, which angered her. She left to perform austerities to lighten her skin color and assigned her attendant, Viraka, to guard the door, fearing her husband's lust would get the better of him and he would sleep with another woman before she could return. While she was gone, Adi, the shape-shifting son of Andhaka, learned of her absence, and devised a plan to avenge his father's death by killing Siva. Adi figured that if he could destroy Siva's *linga* (phallus), Siva himself would be ultimately destroyed. He snuck into Siva's palace by transforming himself into a snake

and slithered past Viraka undetected. He then transformed himself into Parvati, but placed sharp teeth inside the vagina. When Siva saw Adi in his Parvati form, he embraced him/her, but was suspicious that Parvati would return before completing her austerities. He began to look at his wife more closely and seeing that the Parvati in front of him was missing a birthmark, Siva suspected that it was a demon in disguise. He then placed a thunderbolt on the tip of his *linga*, and while making love to Adi, killed him with it.

So far, Siva has been shown to be able to spawn demons and to kill demons, but Siva also from time to time helped demons out. The demon Bana is one of these cases. Bana was the son of the demon Bali, but Siva and Parvati adopted him as their own son. With the backing of Siva, Bana became strong and hungered for war. He once complained to Siva that there were no wars to fight and that he was depressed. Siva smiled and told him that when his flagstaff fell, a great war would come to him. When Bana's flagstaff broke, he happily relayed Siva's message to his minister, Kusmanda, but Kusmanda, who was more level headed than Bana, could sense trouble brewing. Bana's daughter, Usa, wanted a husband and Parvati told her that one night she would have a dream where a man would come to her and join with her in sexual union. The man in that dream would be her future husband. Sure enough, one night she had this dream and the man was Aniruddha, the grandson of Krsna. The problem lay in the fact that Krsna and Bana were sworn enemies. Usa asked her friend Citralekha to find Aniruddha and bring him to her, which she did. The two had a secret love affair, but Bana found out and sought to punish Aniruddha. Aniruddha proved to be an experienced fighter and Bana could not defeat him in physical combat. Under the advice of Kusmanda, Bana resorted to magic instead and managed to tie Aniruddha down with ropes made from snakes. Bana was about to kill Aniruddha, but the wise Kusmanda suggested that since the boy was such a great warrior, it might be better to inquire as to who he was and to

protect him instead of killing him. If he did manage to secretly marry Usa, it would not look good if Bana killed his own son-in-law. Meanwhile, Krsna heard about Aniruddha's capture and mobilized a great army to Bana's capital, set on either rescuing his grandson or avenging his death. Bana's army and Krsna's army collided on the battlefield, but Krsna's force proved to be the better and Bana was forced into a corner. This was unacceptable to Siva, who felt he needed to protect his adopted son, so he sent his own army to help Bana and even stepped on the battlefield himself. The war turned into a battle between Siva and Krsna, who was an avatar of Visnu. The Earth was under great stress from the war and Brahma requested that Siva step out of the fight, since both Siva and Visnu were invincible, so the fight would be never-ending. With Siva gone, Bana had no chance of victory and was facing defeat, but Siva took Bana away with him and granted him immortality. Aniruddha was rescued and was married to Usa and Bana's kingdom was given to Kusmanda to rule.

These were only three examples of Siva's encounters with demons. With Siva's unique contradicting characteristics and the ambiguity of evilness of demons in Hindu mythology, there are a vast number of demon encounters that were not mentioned. Even the three examples given were only one version each of a myriad of versions for the same story. However, unlike Western mythology, where there is usually a distinct black and white aspect to good and evil, where gods are good and demons are bad, in Hindu mythology, sometimes the gods are good and the demons are bad, but other times, the gods do terrible things and the demons are righteous. Similar to India's class system, "god" or "demon" is like a class that one can be born into. How one acts in that class is of their own volition.

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RELATED TOPICS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Adi
Andhaka
Aniruddha
Asura
Bali
Bana
Brahma
Hiranyaksa
Krsna
Kusmanda
Mount Kailasa
Parvati
Siva
Tripura
Usa
Viraka
Visnu

NOTEWORTHY WEBSITES RELATED TO THE TOPIC

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiva>

<http://www.harekrsna.com/philosophy/associates/demons/siva/andhaka.htm>

<http://www.bronzcreative.com/shiva-hindu-god-statue-nataraja-lord-siva.htm>

<http://www.hinduism.co.za/siva.htm>

<http://www.tamilstar.org/mythology/krishna/>

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